

once more unto the breach

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once more unto the breach

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Summary

At this point in his career, Jack prided himself on having a keenly honed ability to anticipate shit, and therefore avoid the unpleasant sensation of being surprised. Or worse, being wrong.

It was, therefore, extremely annoying when Robby had sat down at their regular booth in their regular dive on a regular Tuesday after a shared day off, and said “So, Mohan, huh?” and Jack had felt genuinely, truly surprised.

Notes

they're loser twin flames, your honor

See the end of the work for [more notes](#)

At this point in his career, Jack prided himself on having a keenly honed ability to anticipate shit, and therefore avoid the unpleasant sensation of being surprised. Or worse, being wrong.

There were always small surprises, of course, especially in the course of his job — people were always innovating new ways to fuck up their bodies that subsequently required new ways of performing emergency medical intervention. Every time he pulled a fork out of his haphazard utensil drawer at home he thought of that kid with the fork through her nose who'd come in at the tail end of the shift from hell, and laughed. But on the whole, with the big picture stuff, and especially with stuff about himself, he was pretty incapable of feeling surprised. His therapist said it was a defense mechanism, but hadn't made him try to stop yet, so he figured it was mostly fine.

He hadn't always been that way, obviously - he hadn't been born with it. He still maintained the capacity for surprise well through medical school. In fact, anyone who knew him back then, Robby included, would have called him nearly an optimist, and not usually in a nice way. Every single person in his life, Robby also included, had conveyed extreme skepticism about his decision to take a military scholarship, for example. But it's not like he had that kind of money, and, hey, it was the nineties. End of history, pax americana, that kind of thing. He'd finish school and prepare for a few years of some exotic US-government-funded humanitarian adventures, then come back home when his service obligation was up, and maybe have one or two cool scars to brag about at bars.

That had been August of 2001, so. What came next was, at least to him, definitely a big fucking surprise.

He hadn't lost that ability to be surprised in Afghanistan itself. In fact, especially for the first few years, he existed in what felt like a constant feeling of shock — shock at the environment, how dusty and hot and difficult it was to do something as simple as cleaning a wound; shock at the capacity for violence that emerged in everyone around him, even himself; and, perhaps worst of all, shock at the profound fucking stupidity of the whole thing, and how it just kept fucking going.

(The worst part, the part that he still talked about with his therapist, lo these many years later, was how fucking *good* he was at it all. He could be as fast, as risky, as clever as he wanted. He was doing maneuvers on the operating table, and in the field, that no one back home would ever have tried in a million years, and he was doing them

real fucking well.)

The whole thing was so raw, and stupid, and such a goddamn waste, and yet he still managed to feel continually surprised at how bad things could get, how desperate and angry and scared he could be, how good and brave and cruel and awful the people around him could behave.

And then he'd woken up in a hospital in Germany with a third of his goddamn leg missing, and realized that he felt absolutely no surprise at all.

After that, after the rehab and the therapy and the prosthetic and the discharge, he realized that his time in the army had, without him really noticing, effectively stripped away any normal baseline for feeling shock or amazement or surprise. He'd seen the worst of what humans could do to themselves, had held hearts and guts and brains in his hands, had lost and lost and lost — what was there left to be surprised about?

When they dropped him (or well, most of him) back down into civilian life, there'd been a few hard months of adjustment that he generally preferred not to think about. But when he emerged from *that* (or, well, when Robby had pulled him from that, kicking and screaming), he found that he'd developed a keenly honed ability to sense when, and how, things were going to go to shit, and to plan accordingly. Call it paranoia, call it cynicism, call it whatever - either way, Jack Abbot was no longer a man who could be caught unaware.

It was, therefore, extremely annoying when Robby had sat down at their regular booth in their regular dive on a regular Tuesday after a shared day off, and said "So, Mohan, huh?" and Jack had felt genuinely, truly surprised.

The thing was. Well. Jack wasn't *blind*, was he. He noticed things. That's what made him so good at anticipating shit. He mostly noticed bad things — when a bad storm might roll in and inundate them with MVAs, when a patient was getting a little *too* demanding or impatient or grabby, when Robby looked like he might actually have a meltdown at the nurses' station — but had been known, on occasion, to notice things that were pleasant. Beautiful, even.

So when Dr Samira Mohan had shown up on the first day of her residency, bright-eyed and bushy-tailed and so incredibly beautiful,

well. He'd noticed.

He hadn't done anything, obviously. He'd seen the tangle that Robby had made with Heather Collins, and wanted absolutely no part in that. And he wasn't a creep. He'd served with too many people who had felt casually proprietary over the bodies of the people around them — soldiers they served with, civilians they worked with, soldiers they fought and captured — to want to accidentally impose himself on someone. But he'd noticed.

He'd noticed, and then he'd filed it away with all the other banal observations that made up the background of his life, to be re-examined on occasion but otherwise ignored, and gotten on with it. By that time, Robby had taken over for Adamson, the poor fucker, and Jack had gotten himself sat on the night shift, which he enjoyed, and which meant that he didn't usually see most of the residents and interns and med students. And if he let himself enjoy fleeting glimpses of brown wavy hair or a big bright smile or the faint hint of a citrusy perfume as she passed, well. That was nobody's business but his own. It was something he enjoyed on the same level as a tree laden with cherry blossoms or sunlight coming through his kitchen windows or that fun little Fragonard painting he liked to visit at the Frick — an aesthetic experience, but a passive one.

Of course, he worked with her, too, and he found her to be a very solid resident — thorough, with just the right amount of curiosity, and without being overconfident. He knew that Robby despaired of her slowness, which into her third year showed no signs of improving, but he also knew that Robby had the distinct privilege of constantly getting harassed by Gloria and her team of admins about things like patient rates and patient satisfaction, which Jack, in taking on the bulk of the night shifts, conveniently avoided.

Mohan was slow, though; Robby wasn't usually wrong, even if he sometimes had the diplomacy skills of a rock. On the rare occasions when she was on his shift, he tried to suss out why. He came to the conclusion that she was scared, but not in the usual way young doctors were scared; he'd worked with plenty of them in the field and could recognize the sort of paralyzing fear that overcame someone who really wasn't cut out to do ex laps in a tent, and Mohan wasn't suffering from that. She was eager, and curious, and generally up to do things with him or the senior residents, when they asked.

Mohan's fear seemed to stem from something more analytical — she was afraid of missing something, of not noticing something that the

patient was trying to tell her, of letting any preconceived notions of what might be going on get in the way of a thorough examination. It was why she was always taking insanely long histories, why she was always asking about patients' lives and families and friends, why she was always reluctant to commit to a diagnosis without running every conceivable test.

He could see why this drove Robby up the wall, because it wasn't really a good habit to have in a place like an emergency department, but he could also see how, with some help, that fear could be shaped into something a little more functional, something that would make her a truly good doctor. He wasn't her primary advisor — that was Robby, again — and he didn't see her that much, since she usually worked days. But when she *did* work his shift, he started mentioning studies he'd read, or similar procedures he'd performed. He was feeding her data, giving her information to work with. It was just a hunch, but it seemed like what she really needed, more than yelling (thank you, Robby), was some tools. She wasn't stupid — she was cautious because she felt she didn't have enough information, and it stood to reason that the solution to that was more information to work with.

So. He knew her, but not well, for the first few years of her time at the Pitt, and if he thought of her at all outside of their shifts, it was usually to congratulate himself on being a better instructor than Robby, at least in this one instance. If, occasionally, big brown eyes or soft wisps of hair flashed across his vision while he did his usual maintenance jerk-off in the shower, well, again. Nobody's business but his own.

In retrospect, the PittFest shooting was when things kind of started to get away from him.

The whole thing was a shitshow, obviously, but it was the kind of shitshow in which Jack absolutely thrived. He'd almost been having *fun*, which he felt guilty about later, and his therapist had made him unpack it in his usual irritating but insightful way. It wasn't fun in an enjoyable way, really — it was more like all of those fast-paced insane maneuvers he'd pulled out on the field suddenly became useful again, rather than a liability he'd had to train himself out of. His stupid go-bag of supplies, which he and his therapist regularly talked about, on the grounds that it was a "physical manifestation of his tendency towards paranoid pessimism," turned out to be wildly useful, and had

incidentally finally convinced Gloria to approve adding some of those emergency crike kits to the budget.

He'd felt completely in his element, more than he had since before he'd gotten his foot blown off. He could feel that commanding captain tone creeping back into his voice, could feel the people around him responding to it, could see who thrived under it and who was starting to crumble, and he was absolutely unsurprised when Mohan fell into the former category, rather than the latter.

When he wasn't elbow-deep in somebody's guts, or blowing up catheter balloons, or doing intubations faster than he'd done them in years, he kept chancing glances at her, and kept finding her doing an absolutely spectacular job. Everyone was doing a great job, of course, and he was keeping an eye on everyone equally. But she was so *fast*, faster than he'd ever seen her before, and she was taking initiative when she could, and asking for help when she needed it. He hadn't realized it at the time, exactly, but in retrospect, he realized that his pedagogical approach, such as it was, was paying dividends. He heard later about the fucking crazy EZ-IO drill to the skull she'd done, and recognized the case study she'd based it off of, because he'd been the one to tell her about it.

They'd fallen into step so easily in the middle of all that carnage that he hadn't thought twice of bringing her on to do that fun little cardiac pigtail catheter. He felt a surge of pride, watching her do it, watching her overcome her hesitancy and Walsh's yelling and the crashing stats of the patient and just fucking *do* it, and he hadn't even tried to keep the admiration out of his voice when he'd complemented her in the aftermath.

With hindsight, the blush that had spread across her cheeks at that had probably been the beginning of the end.

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They'd started to see each other more, after that, or maybe it was just that he let himself notice her more. Either way, what had started as an intentionally pedagogical sharing of pertinent medical information had, since PittFest, developed into what could only be described as a friendship.

She started it, which is maybe why he hadn't noticed, at first. She'd asked him, at the end of a rare shared night shift when they happened to be walking out at the same time, if he could tell her more about the

way he'd stabilized a particularly nasty full burn that night, and they'd talked in the parking lot, standing next to her car, for a full thirty minutes before Dana came in for the day shift and asked them what the hell they were still doing there.

The next time, she'd wanted to know about a combat medicine report she'd been reading, and if he had ever done anything similar, and to avoid getting harassed by Dana she'd suggested they go to a coffee shop near the hospital that everyone hated but no one could stop going to. They'd spent an hour there, that time, until Mohan was yawning into her coffee and Jack was itching with the need to shower off the shift's grime.

After that, every time they had a shift together, they'd end up somewhere after. It was mostly medical stuff, to begin with, but slowly more and more personal information started seeping in. He learned that she had a cat, which she'd found wandering around in an alley a few years ago and which was missing an ear. She learned that he had an older sister who lived in Detroit and had never forgiven him for serving, but who invited him to Thanksgiving every year anyway, because she loved him. He learned that she had no siblings, and was starting to suspect, based on how she talked about her life outside of work, that she had a lot of acquaintances, but didn't really have a lot of friends.

After the first coffee, they'd branched out into other, better cafes in the neighborhood, which also incidentally had a lower chance of other hospital workers stopping by, and he also learned her coffee order (caramel macchiato, hideously sweet) and her favorite breakfast pastry (chocolate croissant, followed by chocolate muffin).

Once, they'd run into Robby, who Jack had forgotten did actually live within walking distance to the hospital. He'd evidently come in to his regular cafe for his regular day-off order, and Jack and Mohan had just happened to try the same place on the same day. The three of them looked at each other for a minute, and Jack had felt bizarrely wrong-footed, like he'd been caught out for a crime he hadn't known he was committing. Robby had just smiled, asked about their shift, and loped down the street back to his apartment, but it left Jack feeling more unsettled than he had in some time.

It was a week after this last encounter that Jack and Robby's schedules had finally lined up with the same stretch of days off, and they went for their regular dive bar catch-up drink. And thus the question, and thus Jack's feeling of surprise.

He'd played it off, with Robby. Mohan was a resident, Jack was an attending, they were simply developing a mentor-mentee relationship, and everything was extremely normal. Robby had projected an air of extreme skepticism, but one of *his* mentees was in rehab for stealing pills from the hospital and the other was his ex, so he had even fewer legs to stand on than Jack did.

But the damage had been done. Jack truly hadn't been thinking — or at least hadn't let himself think — of their coffee outings as anything other than professional. It was hard to carve out time to talk more academically or intellectually about their work; the ED didn't exactly lend itself to moments of quiet contemplation for one person, let alone two. And if Robby didn't, or couldn't, give Mohan the kind of guidance she needed to really excel, then it quite literally was Jack's job to pick up the slack.

But Robby's question had ... well, "poisoned the well" sounded a bit too dire, even for him, but it *had* changed something. Made him notice, where he hadn't let himself notice before. And that was the thing that *really* caught him by surprise. Because while he had been trying not to notice her, she had definitely been noticing him back.

That night, buoyed by a few more beers than he usually bothered with, he thought back on their recent interactions, and started to feel like a bit of an idiot.

They had their next shift together a few days later. It was Saturday night, which meant a constant influx of drunk drivers and ODs and alcohol poisonings, and Mohan was bustling around doing an excellent job managing everything. Jack had been locked up with Shen for the better part of an hour trying to stabilize a pedestrian crushed by a pick-up driven by a drunk teenager on a dare, and had just managed to get the poor lady to a place where surgery could come pick her up, when it happened.

He'd been keeping an eye as best as he could on the rest of the ED, but there was only so much you could notice when you were also trying to keep someone alive, and so he didn't catch the build-up; all he heard, leaving the trauma room and pulling off his PPE, was the crash, and the yelp.

He ran over to the source, two trauma rooms over, to find Mohan

struggling to pull herself away from one of the idiot frat boys who'd come in to have his stomach pumped. He'd somehow gotten a hand in her *hair*, and Jack decided that that was simply un-fucking-acceptable.

He and his therapist had done a lot of work, early on, about managing the occasional surges of rage that seemed to come on him sometimes, out of the blue. Intellectually, he understood it as a trauma response, and he felt like he'd gotten pretty good at both anticipating when he would feel that way, and talking himself down before he did something he might regret. Of course, there were always exceptions to the rule.

Before he had really thought it through, he'd stormed up to the bed and grabbed the kid's hand in as tight a grip as he could. "I would very strongly suggest," he said, feeling very calm and clear, "that you let go of my resident."

The kid looked blearily at him, not really processing, and Jack gave his wrist a fun little twist, just to emphasize his point. At that, the kid gave a ridiculous-sounding whine and let go. Mohan stood up and stepped back, looking at the scene with wide eyes and a furious press to her mouth.

"Dr. Mohan," he said, trying not to sound insane, "Please go get security."

"Wha—" the kid said, spluttering, "Dude! Come on!"

"Dr. Mohan," he said again, looking only at her, "Now, please."

She gave the whole scene a once-over and raised her eyebrows at him, with what he felt was an unfair amount of skepticism, and left.

"Right," he said, turning to the dipshit on the bed, "This is how this is going to work. You're going to be handcuffed to this bed, and when you wake up in the morning you're going to be charged with assaulting a healthcare worker, a crime that is, incidentally, a felony in the state of Pennsylvania. For the rest of the night, you will be seen to by me, and me alone, and if I catch even the faintest wind of you saying anything to any other person here, including the doctor you just assaulted, I will call in one of many, many favors I have accumulated over the years, and have a cop sit right here and watch you for the rest of the night. Is that clear?"

The amount of outraged spluttering he received in return made it seem like it was maybe not all that clear, and so, out of the goodness

of his heart, he arranged that bedside cop anyway, just to be safe.

Once that had been dealt with, he left the room, and found himself face to face with the extremely amused face of Bridget, the charge nurse, and Mohan herself, who looked past him to the exam room and laughed, a little viciously. Jack felt his blood heat.

For the rest of the shift, he stayed true to his word, checking in on the little assaulter as little as he could legally get away with, just to make sure he wasn't actually dying. Every time he emerged from the room he found Mohan staring at him from wherever she was working, eyes dark.

By the time the day shift came in to relieve them, the story had evolved to such a degree that Robby pulled him aside before their official handoff began to ask if he had punched a patient in the stomach defending Mohan's honor. Jack chose not to dignify this with a response, and instead dragged Robby over to the bedside of the idiot kid and explained the situation to both him and the new cop who had come to take a statement. By the end of it, Robby looked a little like he might punch the kid himself. They both were very good at emotional management, and so they didn't.

By the time he finally made it out of the locker room, so many people had accosted him to ask about so many different versions of the story that he was working very very hard not to be embarrassed, and also to leave as quickly as possible.

It was for this reason that he missed Mohan leaning against the wall near the locker room door until he very nearly ran into her. He came to an abrupt stop and she smiled, one eyebrow raised. "I hear I have you to thank for defending my honor against a violent assailant who had a gun and also possibly a sword, and maybe another gun as well."

"All in a day's work, Dr. Mohan," he said, very evenly.

"What are the odds my dashing hero might accept thanks in the form of, say, breakfast?" she asked, coming off the wall and walking closer.

Jack wanted to eat breakfast with her very, very badly, and also wanted, suddenly, a hundred other very, very visceral things involving her, and his mouth, and his hands, and her dark, dark eyes. But he was tired, and keyed up, and his leg ached, and so:

"Not this time, Dr. Mohan."

Her face fell a little at that, and well, he couldn't have that. He crowded in a little closer and saw her eyes go wide. "But I would like to revisit that offer at a later date," he said, lowly, and pulled back, feeling a smile pull at the corner of his mouth. "Good work today, Dr. Mohan."

He left her there, looking stunned and very, very beautiful.

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By the time he got home, he felt like he was about to vibrate out of his skin. He'd had the adrenaline comedown from his little encounter during the rest of the shift, but he still felt a little like he was sitting next to a live wire, all his hair on end, on the edge of something explosive that had nowhere to go.

His regular maintenance jack-off in the shower was tortuous. Usually he stripped himself efficiently, thinking of a rotating list of perfectly delightful encounters he'd had with perfectly delightful people, and then moving on with the rest of his day.

This time, he couldn't keep his mind off how she had looked in the exam room, furious and intense, and then how she'd looked in the hallway, stunned and soft. He thought in general it was important not to feel too guilty about sexual fantasies — years in a war zone clinging to whatever amount of normalcy you could find kind of disabused you of that tendency. But he felt a little dirty about this, like he was succumbing to a weakness he thought he'd been able to resist. It was like a floodgate had opened, and all of the moments over the years when he had seen her, and deliberately chosen not to look too closely, came rushing back all at once, melding together into a formless vision of dark hair and dark eyes and long fingers and a pouting mouth, open and panting with pleasure.

He let the evidence swirl down the drain and very carefully forced his mind to go blank.

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After that, well. He couldn't stop thinking about it, about her, about what it might feel like to touch her, taste her, hear her. He felt like he was losing his mind. It didn't help that he was off for four days, and in between his usual runs and his volunteer shift at the VA and his latest attempts to make Qabeli palaw, which never quite lived up to his

memory, he just...obsessed about it. He tried telling himself this was just a natural reaction to stress, and that he'd get it out of his system and move on, but he hadn't jacked himself off with so much enthusiasm since his early twenties.

This was all Robby's fault, probably, but Robby wasn't here, so Jack settled for texting him excerpts from the hospital's google reviews that he thought were about them.

Two days into his break, when it felt like he was about to lose his mind, he got a call from Dana reminding him to come to her birthday party or she was going to stop letting his favorite DoorDash guy deliver to the roof. He made all the usual token protests, but they both knew that he would never actually skip her birthday, and so he got his shit together, put on some real clothes, and went.

By the time he got to the bar, most of the usual crew were already there, at least a drink in. Princess was holding court in a corner booth with the med students and some of the younger nurses, probably, by the looks on their faces, bringing out the greatest hits of her youthful sexual escapades. Robby was sitting with Dana at a high top, but kept glancing in increasingly pathetic ways over to Collins at the bar, so Jack headed over there to torment him and give a kiss to the birthday girl.

Being around people again, *his* people, made him finally feel like he was getting his head on straight. He and Robby exchanged their usual back-pounding hugs and he flirted outrageously with Dana until she whacked him on the arm and sent him for another round.

He waited for their drinks with his back to the bar, taking it in. He felt ... relieved that he couldn't find Mohan in the throng. He needed a few more days to get himself together, he kept telling himself, and then they could go back to their usual post-shift coffees and he would be fine. The charged little flirtation they'd had in the hallway after their last shift would fade into memory, and everything would be predictable and normal and not weird at all.

He turned to the bar again and just as he was about to carefully pick up the drinks to bring back to the high top, he felt a presence at his back, and waited. Mohan leaned on the bar next to him, and he caught a whiff of that sharp citrus perfume she always wore. "Fancy meeting you here, Dr. Abbot," she said. He could hear the teasing smile in her voice.

“Dr. Mohan,” he said, gruffly. He couldn’t bring himself to look at her. He felt like if they made eye contact she’d be able to sense all the filthy, dirty things he’d been thinking about her in the last two days, all the ways he’d imagined making her sigh and moan and scream. Still — “What are you drinking?” He wasn’t a complete animal.

“Oh,” she said brightly, “I’ve got it,” and she leaned over the bar a little, right into his line of sight, stretching a hand towards the bartender. He heard her, faintly, ordering a G and T, but he suddenly couldn’t stop looking at her back. She was wearing some kind of slinky dress that gathered high at the neck in the front, and then swooped low, leaving her entire upper back completely bare. The dress reappeared just before the swell of her ass, which he very carefully did not look at. He could see the muscles of her shoulders, strong from all the lifting and turning and pulling they did in the ED, flex as she leaned, could see the long, long line of her spine, the dimples at the base of it, the hint of the curve of her stomach.

He drew his gaze back up and found her gazing steadily back at him, amusement flashing in her eyes and the curl of her lips. He cleared his throat. “Nice dress.” He sounded like he’d smoked a pack with Dana, Jesus.

“Thanks,” she said, and smiled. The G and T appeared and she swept it up and pushed away from the bar. “See you, Dr. Abbot,” she said, melting back into the crowd. He told himself not to watch her leave, and did it anyway.

By the time he brought the drinks back to the table, Robby and Dana were both looking at him with very thinly veiled amusement. “Do *not*,” he said severely, pointing at them each in turn.

Robby grinned, one of the rare boyish grins that made him look just like the scrawny kid he’d met in med school. “I see the mentor-mentee relationship is progressing nicely.”

“Fuck *off*, Robby,” he gritted out.

“Oh don’t mind him,” said Dana with a reassuring pat to his shoulder, “he can’t help himself. Neither can you, apparently.” She cackled.

“Do either of you know what it’s like to be hit upside the head with a carbon fiber prosthetic? Do you want to find out?”

“Settle down, kids,” Dana said, still grinning. “Come on, Jack. You can tell us. You pining?”

“Oh Jack doesn’t pine,” Robby cut in helpfully. “He represses.”

“Only one of us is in therapy here, man,” said Jack, “and it ain’t either of you.”

They were still laughing when Jack stalked away.

He did a quick assessment of the bar and decided the next safest place was the gaggle of kids around Princess. He could help terrorize them with some war stories.

Half an hour and some traumatized children later, he was halfway through a second beer and feeling more cheerful. Everything was going to be fine, he told himself again. He hadn’t actually embarrassed himself, or given more away than she had probably already figured out. Anyone would have looked. She wasn’t tormenting him on purpose, obviously; he was just ... primed to appreciate her. There wasn’t anything embarrassing about it. It was fine.

It was then, of course, that she struck.

“Drinking alone, Dr. Abbot?” She dropped down into one of the seats that the kids had fled from.

“Not anymore, apparently,” he said, drily.

“Are you having a good evening?”

“Oh fine,” he said. “Are you?” This was agonizing. He tried not to look at her, and failed. She was ...well. Normally he saw her under the harsh fluorescents of the ED, and she still always managed to look beautiful. Now she looked stunning, but soft, limmed with light. Possibly he was losing his mind.

“Oh, well,” she said, “it started out badly. But it’s picking up.”

He gave her look, raising his eyebrows. “Badly how? First drink that bad?”

“Oh, I was somewhere else first, and *that* was the disaster. First date, you know. Well, first *and* last.”

He felt himself go very still. “Oh? That bad, huh?”

“He was fine,” she said, and blew some of her hair out of her face, “I just wasn’t into it.”

“Oh?” This was horrible.

“Well, I thought I was, at first. He seemed like he checked all the right boxes. Tall, and cute. Funny.”

“Sounds nice.” He was fairly sure he was dying.

“That’s what I thought!” she said, gesturing expansively. “But it was just so... it was just so boring. I just felt so ... ugh. You know?”

“...Right.” Was he in hell, and he hadn’t noticed? It was seeming increasingly likely.

“It was just...” she trailed off, looking at him a bit uncertainly. He found himself looking back, helplessly. The tenor of the conversation seemed to switch.

“Just what,” he found himself saying.

“Well.” She twisted a piece of hair around her finger. She was starting to look a little nervous, actually. He felt an electric sort of tension start to build.

“What exactly was wrong with him, Dr. Mohan,” he ground out.

She bit her lip, eyes wide and dark, looking away. He pressed his advantage.

“Dr. Mohan,” he said, trying not to bark it out like he would in the ED, and probably failing. “I know you’re good at examining all the evidence available to make a diagnosis. So what, exactly, was fucking wrong with him?”

She seemed like she was deciding something, weighing options. He waited her out, letting the moment stretch, refusing to look away. He had a pretty good idea of where this was going, now, but she had to be the one to lead the way. Still, maybe she needed a little help.

“Samira,” he said, softly. Her eyes snapped to his. “Tell me.”

“If I tell you,” she said, just as softly, all teasing gone, “what will you do?”

“If you tell me why you left that date, and came here instead, in that dress, to drink with me,” he said, trying to keep his voice even and probably failing, “I will get up and leave this bar.”

That caught her up short. "Sorry - what?"

"I will get up and leave this bar," he said again, "and I will walk to my car, and I will turn the engine on, and I will wait exactly five minutes. If you decide to stay here, I'll leave, and there will be absolutely no hard feelings."

"And if I decide to leave? And meet you at your car?"

This was it, he decided. He could play this off, and eventually they'd go back to their professional little coffee club and he'd wean himself off of the fantasies and pretend not to know that she went on dates that left her unsatisfied, and they'd move on. Or —

"If you meet me at my car, I would like to drive you to a location of your choosing. I would like to watch you take that dress off. I would like to lay you out on the nearest flat surface, and develop an intimate knowledge of your anatomy. I would very, very much like to taste you. And then, I would very much like to fuck you. We could do some of that, or all of that. Up to you."

Over the course of that little speech, he'd watched her mouth drop open in shock, watched her pupils blow wide open, and her chest begin to heave. He reached out and tucked a strand of hair behind her ear. "So. Your choice."

"Well," she said, and looked at him. He could see some of the nervousness melt away the longer they looked at each other, could feel some of that confidence he loved to watch in her seep back in. "Well," she said again. "The truth is, Dr. Abbot, that he wasn't you."

He took a fortifying breath and made to stand up. "Right. I'm starting the clock. See you, Dr. Mohan."

"Also," she said, and he could see a sly little smile start at the corner of her lips, "he wouldn't stop FaceTiming his Mom. I got up to go to the bathroom and left."

He burst into laughter. "Jesus Christ. Kids these days."

"I know, right? Save it for the second date at least." She was grinning now. She looked radiant.

He made himself stand up. "Ok, for real this time. Five minutes, Dr. Mohan. Don't be late." He made for the door, refusing to look at Robby and Dana, who he was certain had watched the entire

interaction.

Exactly four minutes and thirty seconds later, she got in the car.

They went to his place, because it was closer.

The car ride had sizzled with a delicious building tension. He'd kept a hand on her thigh, strong and lean under the silkiness of her dress. She'd watched him, eyes skimming from his hands to his neck to his profile and back. They didn't speak.

They didn't speak as they made their way up to his door, or when they got into his entryway, or when they toed off their shoes and hung up their coats. He let himself put a hand on her back, so bare and so, so soft, and lead her into the living room, and they still didn't speak. Finally, they turned to face each other.

"Do you want a drink?" he asked. It seemed like the thing to do. "Or something to eat?"

She smiled at him then, one of her warm delighted smiles, and slipped her arms around his neck. "Dr Abbot, if you don't start fulfilling those promises right now, I'm leaving."

"Well," he said, and couldn't hide a smile. "We can't have that. Although under the circumstances," he said, slipping an arm around her back again, stroking up her spine, "I really think you should call me Jack."

He'd barely closed the door to the bedroom when she was on him, crowding him up against it and pulling his head down to hers. She was devouring him, deep searching kisses that he could barely keep up with, leaving him panting and ravenous and insane.

"Jesus," he said into her neck, biting up to her ear, all finesse gone. "Samira. Jesus Christ." She was pressing herself against him rhythmically now, restless and glorious. He wanted to slip a leg between her thighs, wanted to feel her rut up against him, wanted to hear the sounds she made as she started to get desperate, and he was just thinking about rearranging them to do just that when she abruptly pulled away.

She looked, if it was possible, even more radiant. Her hair was slipping out of its clip and her lips were red, swollen. Her arms shone with a thin sheen of sweat, and he could see the delicate peaks of her nipples through the dress. He reached out, unthinking, to touch, but she stepped away again before he could reach.

He stepped towards her, feeling a little like a dog on a leash and not exactly minding. She grasped him by the shoulders and turned him, suddenly, backing him up towards the bed. The backs of his knees hit the mattress and he abruptly sat down, feeling a little winded and deliciously out of control. She stood a foot away from him, just out of reach.

“I believe that you set an agenda, Dr. Abbot,” she said, reaching upwards to the back of her collar, high on her neck, “and I’d hate to be accused of getting us off track.”

“By all means,” he said, trying to regain a sense of composure, and failing. His pants were becoming extremely uncomfortable. “I’m a captive audience.”

She started fiddling with the back of the dress, but soon got a look on her face that he recognized from failed IV placements and unsatisfying test results. “I,” she said, a bit out of breath, “oh, fuck it. Sorry. Can you?” She turned around and brushed her hair off her shoulder, then looked back at him. “Please?”

“Never let it be said that I am not a gentleman,” he said, getting to his feet and reaching for her collar. It was a finicky little clasp, but after a moment of cursing and somewhat breathless giggling, it was free, and then, with one big exhale, she let the dress fall to the floor. He abruptly stopped laughing.

He could see, just over her shoulder, the peaks of her breasts, nipples tight and perfectly dusky. He trailed a finger over the slope of her shoulder and down her arm, watching goosebumps trail in his wake. He drew his hand back up, and started the same light trailing touch down her other side. Her breath was shaky now, her mouth open and her head beginning to loll backwards.

He let his hands land at her waist, squeezing lightly, and trailing up her ribs. She gave a soft little giggle and squirmed at one particularly sensitive spot, but then grew more and more still as his hands reached the swell of her breasts.

He cupped one in each hand, feeling their weight, testing their

softness. “I knew these would be perfect,” he heard himself saying into her neck. “So gorgeous. I can’t wait to get my mouth on them.”

He pinched each nipple between his fingers, rolling and tugging, watching her face against his shoulder for her reaction. She was panting now, her hands clenching and unclenching at her sides, eyes squeezed shut, letting out soft little mewls on each exhale.

He couldn’t seem to stop talking now. “I knew you’d be so good for me. I thought about you like this, letting me touch you like this. I wondered what noises you’d make, how loud you’d be.” She gasped at this. “Yes, like that. I want to hear you. Fuck, I want to *taste* you.”

He slid a hand down her stomach, feeling the muscles of her core flutter and clench as he brushed over them, feather light. His fingers met the seam of her panties, lacy and soft. He trailed his fingers over them, feeling the press of her curls underneath, and slipped lower, until he felt —

“Oh fuck,” he ground out, “fuck, you’re so wet already, aren’t you? Jesus Christ, you’re soaking through these, sweetheart. You’ve made such a mess, and we haven’t even started.” He barely knew what he was saying anymore, but she was moaning in earnest now, pressing frantic little gasps of “Jack, fuck, *Jack* into the side of his neck, writhing in his arms.

He moved his hand back up and then slipped his fingers beneath the lace, feeling the dampness that had spread into her curls, seeking lower and lower. He swiped one finger through her folds, exploratory, collecting her slick, and then moved back up to her clit, rubbing soft, soothing circles around it. Her hips were making abortive little thrusts against his hand. She was starting to shake.

He took his hand out, and she nearly sobbed, but he just grabbed one of her own and guided it back inside with his. “That’s it, sweetheart,” he said, “come on, show me what you like, help me make you come.”

“Oh fuck,” she said, but moved her fingers, dipping into her folds to collect wetness and then smearing it around her clit, rubbing increasingly frantically right on top of it. He slid his own hand down to her entrance.

“Let me know if this is too much at this angle,” he said, and waited for her to nod, shakily, before slipping his ring finger right up inside.

“That’s it,” he said, “that’s it, you’re so good. Ride my hand,

sweetheart. Take what you need, come on.” She was sobbing now, legs shaking, hand still moving rapidly over her own clit.

“I -“ she gasped, “I don’t know if I—“

“You can,” he said, soothing, “I know you can, come on. You can do it.”

That seemed to do the trick. With a sobbing gasp, she came, writhing against him while her walls clamped down on his finger like a vice. “That’s it,” he said, “that’s perfect. You’ve got this, that’s excellent. Amazing job.”

She sighed and sagged against him, boneless, and exhaled a little laugh. “That’s exactly what you sound like when you’re teaching me at work, you know.”

He laughed. “Well, nothing like a little positive reinforcement.”

He slid his finger gently out of her and rubbed, feather-light, through the folds, watching her shake.

She turned in his arms, then, and laughed into a kiss. “Give me a second, doctor, geez.”

“Sorry,” he said, not sorry at all.

She rolled her eyes then, and pushed him onto the bed. She slipped her panties off unceremoniously and then dropped into his lap. He went in to kiss her but she pulled away, then tugged at the hem of his shirt. “I cannot *believe* you are still wearing clothes. Get these off.”

Together, they got his shirt unbuttoned and slipped off his shoulders, and then he unceremoniously pulled the undershirt over his head. She looked at him, then, just for a moment, before raking her nails down his chest, right over his nipples, with surprising viciousness. He inhaled sharply, and she laughed.

“Good start,” she said, smirking, “but let’s take care of the rest.” With that, she slid to the floor, kneeling between his thighs. He abruptly stopped breathing.

She went for his fly first, flicking open the button and sliding down the zipper. He sighed with the relief of pressure against his cock, which quickly vanished when she slid a delicate finger up and down the length of it through his boxer briefs. Then she bent to his feet, and

looked up.

“Now,” she said, a bit carefully, “no wrong answers here, Dr Abbot, but exactly how much are we taking off?”

He couldn't help a flush of affection from sweeping through him, and he leaned forward, cupping the back of her head in his hand. “I'll help,” he said.

Together, they divested him of his shoe and his pants, leaving him in his boxer briefs and his leg. She sat back and watched him, gaze steady and soft, as he reached down to undo the clasp of the prosthetic. It was an immediate relief to take it off, and he couldn't keep back a huge sigh of pleasure as he slid off the sock and then reached to give his limb a massage. She reached out, and then paused, looking up at him. “Can I..?” she asked, trailing off.

“Yeah,” he said, his voice a bit husky, “yeah, of course.”

She approached the massage with the confident hands of a professional, the pressure just the right side of painful, careful to avoid the sensitive seam of the scar. He groaned, long and low, as she rubbed him down, soothing the skin and easing the tension of the muscles. Slowly her hands began to move further up, and as she rounded his knee to his thigh, he felt his breathing begin to pick up. His cock, which had flagged a bit in the undressing process, began to take a renewed interest in the proceedings, pressing against his boxer briefs, leaving a wet patch in the front.

“Oh,” she sighed, a little playfully, and looked up at him through her lashes. “We forgot one layer. May I?”

He laughed a little and nodded as she reached for the waistband and began to slide them down. His cock popped out, a little too eager, and she laughed.

“Oh! Hello there!” she said brightly, and he flopped backwards, groaning a laugh. She slid the boxers the rest of the way off and then slid her hands back up his thighs, scrunching her fingers into the thatch of hair at the apex. He looked down to find her staring, a little hungrily, at him. His cock twitched, hopefully.

“Can I?” she asked, not looking away, and he tried to keep his tone even as he ground out, “Please do.”

She started with a delicate lick on the crown, and then pressed

kittenish kisses down the length and back up, before finally taking him into her mouth. They both groaned as she pulled him in, and he hit the back of her throat.

“Jesus *Christ*, Samira,” he ground out. “Holy fuck. God.”

She pulled back off and gave him a beaming grin. “Just Samira is fine, actually.”

“You are so much fucking trouble, you know that?” he said, but he couldn’t conceal the tone of affection. He got a handful of her curls to hold onto, not steering her, just keeping close. He couldn’t stop babbling. “God, you look amazing. You look amazing all the time, I can’t stop looking at you. It’s getting to be a problem, did you know that? I can’t keep myself from looking at you. You’re just so — *fuck*.”

He looked down again and found her squirming, making soft little noises as she sucked, tracing one hand down between her legs, and then he abruptly decided that it was time to move things along.

He pulled her off him, and she gasped with no small amount of indignation. “Excuse you, Dr. Abbot —“ she began, but he cut her off.

“I would like to fuck you, very badly, right fucking now.”

They stared at each other for a second, heat building between them, before she grinned and stood up. “Copy that, captain. Where do you want me?”

“So much fucking *trouble*,” he ground out, and pulled her into his lap as she let out a delighted shriek.

He kissed her ravenously, roving his hands up and down her waist, her thighs, her arms, and then forced himself to pull away. “Condoms in the night stand, if you don’t mind, Dr. Mohan.”

She rolled her eyes but got up, and he took the opportunity to slide himself up the bed until he was leaning against the headboard. She crawled up after him, straddling his lap, and bent down to give him another searching kiss, hands reaching down to stroke him again. He let his hands explore her, kneading and groping as he went, until her breathing got more frantic and she pulled away. “Come on,” she said, “come on, come on.”

She couldn’t get the condom open. He took it from her, ripped it open with his teeth, and had himself sheathed in about half a second. She

gaped at him until he shrugged. "Army."

"Oh my god, you complete idiot," she said, with great fondness, and then sank herself down on his cock.

It took her a few passes to get him all the way in, and he gritted his teeth and tried to be very, very brave. She was making choked-off little gasps as she worked herself onto him, and he gave himself a very stern reminder that it was rude to simply grab her and sink her the rest of the way down. But something must have shown in his eyes as he watched her, because she gave him a wicked little smirk and leaned forward to whisper in his ear. "Come on, Jack, make me feel it."

He grabbed her hips, then, and slammed her down into his lap. She gave a shocked shout that quickly turned into a groan as he lifted her up and brought her back down again. "Holy fuck," she gasped into his neck, "holy shit."

"Come on, Dr. Mohan," he said, "this is a collaborative procedure."

She bit him then, and he groaned, feeling his cock twitch inside her. But she started to move, and together they built a rhythm that was indulgent and rich, deep long strokes in and out of her as she grabbed at his hair, his chest, the headboard. She was so wet, dripping down the sides of his cock as she rode him. He started talking again.

"You're so good. I can hear how wet you are, sweetheart. God, you're so good. You're so good at taking what you want, aren't you. I know you can do it. I can't wait to taste you, gonna make you sit on my face, get me soaked with you."

She was gasping now, and shaking with that same building tremor from earlier. He reached a hand down between them to rub her clit. He could feel his own orgasm growing at the base of his spine

"Yeah, sweetheart, you going to come? Come on my cock, now come on. You're doing such good work, you're so perfect. You're driving me completely crazy, sweetheart. Can you come for me? Come on, I want to feel it. Take what you need, come on."

He was begging now, desperate. She was grinding into his hand and breathing harsh sobs into his shoulder, muttering that same litany of his name. He was going crazy, trying to hold on, desperately unsure if he could. He could feel his balls tightening up, everything coiling into readiness.

“Yes, come on, you can do it, Samira. That’s it, that’s so good. Let go, sweetheart, I’ve got you.”

He gave her clit a particularly hard pinch, and with that, she fell over the edge, shaking into his lap. She squeezed his cock in a rolling, impossibly tight grip, and that was it. He was done. He flew over the edge right after her, grinding himself up into her as she shook on top of him, keening soft little “oh, oh, oh”s into his neck.

They breathed together, for a moment, foreheads touching, and then he slid his mouth to kiss her cheeks, her eyelids, her forehead, her nose. She laughed a little, more of a sigh, and sagged more bonelessly against him.

After a moment, he rustled her up. “Come on sweetheart, let me take the condom off.”

She slid up off of him, causing them both to groan, and then flopped bonelessly to the side as he tied off the condom and tossed it into the wastebasket next to the nightstand, and lay down to join her. She smiled at him, a little wary.

“So,” she said, “that was nice.”

He couldn’t keep a smile back at the sound of the very studied casualness in her voice. “It was,” he agreed placidly.

“I wouldn’t be opposed to doing it again,” she said, carefully.

“I think that would be agreeable,” he said, nodding, not giving anything away.

“Right,” she said, visibly gathering herself to get up, “ok, so, I should —“

That was when he struck, rolling her over and pinning her to the bed, caging her in. She looked up at him, gaping.

“Dr. Mohan,” he said, in the same tone he used to quiz the med students, “can you recall the official agenda of this evening?”

“...Yes,” she said, warily.

“And have we completed each of those tasks?”

She had to visibly think for a moment. “Not ... all of them, I believe.”

“Very good,” he said, and watched her shiver. “With that in mind, do you think it’s reasonable for you to leave, with a task unfinished?”

She was smiling now, eyes dancing. “Oh no sir, Dr. Abbot, I wouldn’t dream of it.”

He glared at her. “Laying it on a little thick there.”

She rolled her eyes. “So sorry. Please continue.”

“As I was saying,” he continued loftily, “there are still several important steps to this operation that have not yet been completed. Furthermore, I believe that I am owed something rather substantial.”

She looked at him in genuine confusion then. “What?”

“Ah, Dr. Mohan,” he intoned, “that would be breakfast,” and bent down to kiss her.

End Notes

no smut is complete without 3k of character study beforehand.
how else will we understand the precise dimensions of their
yearning.

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